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the country is becoming more and more democratic, and the Socialists are securing such a strong foothold in the chamber, indirect taxation, which falls so heavily on the poor, must sooner or later give way to increased direct taxation. In fact M. Casimir-Périer speaks out plainly in this sense in the Declaration already mentioned, and M. Yves Guyot, in the work which has been cited shows clearly that such a reform can be introduced with perfect justice to all concerned, since landed property is not paying its share. In this way the Moderate Republicans hope to checkmate the Radicals and Socialists, and postpone to a still more distant future the threatened enactment of an income tax, which has become a party cry, not so much for the purpose of putting money in the national treasury, as for extracting money from the purses of the rich *bourgeoisie*.

THEODORE STANTON.

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

THERE are many portions of this country where the free public library is still unknown, and where its value as an educational factor is not as yet appreciated. During the past few years, however, a new impetus has been given to the movement, so that to-day it may with truth be said that in its new life the free public library is passing through very much the same phases of its existence as did the free public school, which for many years received its sole support from a very small section of the country. The benefit to be derived from a collection of books open to the free use of the public is being more widely appreciated, and its introduction to localities to which it has heretofore been a stranger must necessarily follow. The intelligent teachers of the present day are among the strongest supporters of the free public library, having the opportunities to see the great advantages which the pupils under their charge enjoy in the free use of a library of well-selected books. The very best results in education will be found in that town where the librarian is enthusiastic in his efforts to supply the needs of the school superintendent in carrying out his desires of instilling in the minds of his pupils that habit of reading which tends to make their studies tenfold more beneficial. This coöperation between these two men charged with the education of the young results not only in forming a habit of reading, but in teaching a pupil to think and investigate for himself.

I am led to write these lines on the free public libraries by reason of the fact that after reading a paper on the subject last summer before an audience composed largely of teachers, I was surrounded by many who, coming from those sections where free public libraries are still institutions of the future, were greatly surprised to learn of the very important part which libraries are playing in educational life elsewhere. Their crude ideas of the use of a public library, as well as the duties of a librarian, find their best expression perhaps in the following extract from an address delivered by the late James Russell Lowell. He pictured to his hearers the inefficient, if not almost useless, librarian when he said: "Formerly the duty of a librarian was considered too much that of a watch dog to keep people as much as possible away from the books, and to hand these over to his successor as little worn by use as he could." Then follows a picture of the enthusiastic and progressive librarian of the present day, in these significant words: "Librarians now, it is pleasant to see, have a different notion of

their trust, and are in the habit of preparing for the direction of the inexperienced lists of such books as they think best worth reading." Herein lies the secret of very much of the excellent work now being done in our free public libraries. The librarian feels that he is negligent of his trust if he does not do something more than hand out to the inquiring reader such book as he may ask for. He deems it to be part of his duty not only to take the book to the reader, but also to draw the reader to the book. In short, his ambition is to see the books which are in his keeping put to good use, resting confident that such reading must of very necessity improve the mind of the reader, and to just that extent prove to be of lasting benefit to him.

But it may be asked, What can a librarian do? What steps can he take to be of service to the reader other than to furnish him with that literature for which he seeks? The answer to these questions must be "very little," if it is always left to the reader to take the initiative. If, on the other hand, the librarian studies the tastes of the frequenters of his library, experience in some of our cities at least teaches that the answer must perforce be "much."

As an illustration of one method from the use of which good results are sure to follow, it may be well to mention that work above referred to, namely, a coöperation between the school superintendent and the librarian. As fact is better than fancy, so, too, will the practice of a librarian in one of our large cities prove of greater interest than would any theory which might be described. The librarian of the city keeps himself continually informed as to the course of study being pursued by the students of the university situated near by. In the reading-room he sets aside a table for their especial use, on which will always be found those books which they may, from time to time, find it profitable to refer to in the course of preparing their themes and essays. A student having, for instance, a thesis to write on some historical subject, knows that he has only to go to the library to find on this special table such books as the librarian has selected as bearing particularly on the subject of his paper.

Another work which this same librarian is doing, whose good results are self evident, is to keep informed of those many topics of current news which are daily appearing in the newspapers. Of these he makes a list, which he places on a bulletin board, adding to each subject the names of those books or magazine articles with their catalogue number, which one may well read if he desires to pursue the subject. Let us assume that the librarian, on taking up the morning paper, reads that the United States Government has established a protectorate over the Hawaiian Islands. This item of news he cuts from the paper, places it on the bulletin board, and to it affixes the name of such books as he can recommend to the reader who desires to know more of the Hawaiian Islands, or who wishes to clear up his perhaps too crude ideas of what a protectorate is. How many of us when looking over our daily paper find ourselves but slightly informed on many topics we read about? To how many of us would not such a librarian as above described prove of great assistance? It is such work as this which induces the reader to investigate for himself, and it is such a library as this which, being something more than a mere storehouse for books, proves to be a pleasant retreat for the reader, and a delightful experience to the visitor.

The writer does not remember ever having seen in any library any sight

which has given him more pleasure than when, one winter's morning, talking with the librarian of the above-mentioned library, he watched the visitors come in, both young and old, male as well as female, and, after consulting the bulletin of that day's news, go at once to the desk and ask for such books as referred to those subjects in which each was particularly interested. This surely is work worth doing, for it trains the reader in that very desirable habit of investigating for himself, and incidentally inculcates a love of reading which is sure to prove a lasting source of happiness and contentment.

Such, also, is the kind of coöperation which this same librarian has established between himself and the school teachers in his city. He urges these latter to bring the scholars to the library that they may there consult books and pictures having reference to their courses of study. The enthusiasm which such a man brings to his daily work makes not only the library a pleasant place to go to, but tends, in a very marked degree, to make the schoolroom happier and its daily task more beneficial. Of this city it cannot justly be said, as was charged by the Hon. Charles Francis Adams in speaking of a certain New England town, "that though the school and the library stand in our main street, side by side, there is, so to speak, no bridge leading from the one to the other."

In the city above referred to there is a steady stream constantly passing between the school and the library, and the good results of such investigation are best shown by the class of books which the pupils in its public schools are using. It is this energy of the modern librarian which has developed the newer life in library management of which mention has been made, and his continued enthusiasm must be depended upon to still further increase the usefulness of which free public libraries are capable. The good service which such a librarian can render to a community may, however, be very much hampered, if his library is under the charge of a board of trustees who have no true conception of the possibilities for usefulness of the institution under their charge. Too often does it happen that, unmindful of what is being done in other cities, they permit matters to drift along, regarding the ideas advanced by a librarian, such as above described, as foolish and impracticable. The problems of library science are as important as those which present themselves to school committees, and a trustee who, either from unwillingness, or from want of time, does not to some extent at least make a study of them, is a detriment to the community, because he is occupying a place which might be filled by some one who would meet the librarian's zeal with his own enthusiastic interest in the subject. Given a city or town with both a progressive librarian and an enthusiastic and investigating school superintendent, their respective boards being in hearty sympathy with them, and there is practically no limit to the good educational work which their combined efforts will accomplish. The school, teaching how to read, and the library, teaching what to read, will together raise the standard of the literature read in that city, which result must show fruit in the increased happiness and intelligence of its inhabitants.

E. C. HOVEY.

LABOR POLITICS IN A NEW PLACE.

SINCE the Reform Act of 1884, Labor candidates at parliamentary elections in England have been numerous. There were three Labor members in